

National Missile Defense: Russia's Reaction

June 14, 2002

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

RL30967

Summary

In the late 1990s, the United States began to focus on the possible deployment of defenses against long-range ballistic missiles. The planned National Missile Defense (NMD) system would have exceeded the terms of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. Recognizing this, the Clinton Administration sought to convince Russia to modify the terms of the Treaty. But Russia was unwilling to accept any changes to the Treaty. It also decried the U.S. plan to deploy NMD, insisting that it would upset strategic stability and start a new arms race.

Russia claimed that the ABM Treaty is the “cornerstone of strategic stability” and that, without its limits on missile defense, the entire framework of offensive arms control agreements could collapse. Furthermore, Russia argued that a U.S. NMD system would undermine Russia’s nuclear deterrent and upset stability by allowing the United States to initiate an attack and protect itself from retaliatory strike. The Clinton Administration claimed that the U.S. NMD system would be directed against rogue nations and would be too limited to intercept a Russian attack. But Russian officials questioned this argument. They doubted that rogue nations would have the capability to attack U.S. territory for some time, and they believed that the United States could expand its NMD system easily. Furthermore, they argued that, when combined with the entirety of U.S. conventional and nuclear weapons, an NMD system would place the United States in a position of strategic superiority.

During the Clinton Administration and first year of the Bush Administration, Russian officials stated that, if the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty and deployed an NMD, Russia would withdraw from a range of offensive arms control agreements. Furthermore, Russia could deploy multiple warheads on its ICBMs to overcome a U.S. NMD, or deploy new intermediate-range missiles or shorter-range nuclear systems to enhance its military capabilities.

Russia has also outlined diplomatic and cooperative military initiatives as alternatives to the deployment of a U.S. NMD. Russia has proposed that the international community negotiate a Global Missile and Missile Technology Non-Proliferation regime as a means to discourage nations from acquiring ballistic missiles. It has also suggested that it would cooperate with nations in Europe to develop and deploy defenses against theater-range ballistic missiles. Many analysts believe this proposal was designed to win support among U.S. allies for Russia’s opposition to the U.S. NMD program. U.S. officials expressed an interest in the idea but said it could not substitute for defenses against longer-range missiles.

The Clinton Administration sought to address Russia’s concerns by offering continued support to the fundamental principles of the ABM Treaty and by seeking to convince Russia that the U.S. NMD system would remain too limited to threaten Russia’s nuclear deterrent. The Bush Administration, in contrast, has supported more robust missile defenses, but it also has stated that they will not be directed against Russia’s offensive forces. The President has indicated that the United States will need to move beyond the limits in the ABM Treaty, but he suggested that Russia join the United States in developing a new strategic framework.

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Introduction

During the latter years of the Clinton presidency, the United States began to focus on the possible deployment of defenses against long-range ballistic missiles. The Administration, and many missile defense supporters, claimed that the United States needed to pursue National Missile Defenses (NMD) because “rogue” nations such as North Korea, Iran, and Iraq might soon acquire longer range missiles that could strike U.S. territory, and the United States could not be certain that the threat of offensive retaliation would deter these unpredictable actors. The Clinton Administration realized that its plans for NMD would exceed the limits imposed by the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between the United States and Soviet Union. Consequently, the Administration opened discussions with Russia in an effort to negotiate amendments to the Treaty that would permit the deployment of a limited NMD system.

Russian officials consistently and repeatedly insisted that the 1972 ABM Treaty is the cornerstone of strategic stability (this is defined on page 4). They argued that any changes to the Treaty that permitted the deployment of defenses against long-range ballistic missiles would undermine international strategic stability, upset the nuclear balance established by the Treaty, and interfere with Russia’s nuclear deterrent capabilities. During talks with the Clinton Administration, Russia refused to accept any modifications to the ABM Treaty that would permit national missile defenses and campaigned against the U.S. policy at meetings with other nations and international organizations. Russia also offered alternatives, suggesting that the United States, Russia, and the international community address emerging missile threats with diplomacy and arms control measures that would seek to stop the proliferation of new threats and with cooperation on theater-range ballistic missile defenses to address those threats that did emerge.

This report provides a detailed review of Russia’s reaction to U.S. policy on missile defense and U.S. proposals for modifications to the ABM Treaty. It begins with a brief background section that describes the central limits in the ABM Treaty and U.S. policy on the deployment of missile defenses. It then describes, in more detail, Russia’s objections to the U.S. proposals. The report also provides a summary of possible military responses that Russia might take after the United States withdraws from the ABM Treaty and begins deployment of missile defenses and contains a discussion of Russia’s proposals for diplomatic and military alternatives to the U.S. plans to deploy missile defenses. The report concludes with a brief discussion of the U.S. response to Russia’s objections, a few issues for Congress, and a summary of the Russian reaction to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty.

Background

The ABM Treaty

The United States and Soviet Union signed the Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty) in May 1972. This Treaty prohibits the deployment of ABM systems for the defense of the nations’ territory, or an individual region, or defenses that can provide the base for such a defense. It permits each side to deploy limited ABM systems at two locations, one centered on the nation’s capital and one at a location containing ICBM silo launchers. A 1974 Protocol further limited each nation to one ABM site, located either at the nation’s capital *or* around an ICBM deployment area. Each ABM site can contain no more than 100 ABM launchers and 100 ABM interceptor missiles. The Treaty also specifies that, in the future, any radars that

provide early warning of strategic ballistic missile attack must be located on the periphery of the national territory and oriented outward.

The Treaty bans the development, testing, and deployment of sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based ABM systems and ABM system components (these include interceptor missiles, launchers, and radars or other sensors that can substitute for radars). Each party can propose amendments, and, in the Standing Consultative Commission established by the Treaty, they can consider possible proposals for further increasing the viability of the Treaty. Each party can also withdraw from the Treaty, after giving 6 months notice, if “extraordinary events related to the subject matter of this Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests.”¹

In September 1997, the Clinton Administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Succession that named Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan as the successors to the Soviet Union for the Treaty. This agreement never entered into force because Congress insisted that the Clinton Administration submit it to the Senate for advice and consent, as an amendment to the Treaty. The Clinton Administration never did so, in part because it feared that the Senate might reject the agreement in an effort to abolish the Treaty. Some Members of Congress argued that the ABM Treaty was no longer in force because the Soviet Union has ceased to exist. The Clinton Administration, however, determined that, in the absence of alternative arrangements, Russia would serve as the successor to the Soviet Union for the Treaty.

The Bush Administration did not explicitly accept the argument that the ABM Treaty was no longer in force and Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz said the United States would withdraw before violating the Treaty. During their nomination hearings, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld referred to the Treaty as “ancient history” and Secretary of State Powell stated that the Treaty is no longer relevant to our strategic framework. The President Bush has also said that the ABM Treaty is outdated, and that the United States must move beyond the limits in the Treaty to deploy effective missile defenses. He announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Treaty on December 13, 2001; this withdrawal took effect on June 13, 2002.

National Missile Defense Plans

Clinton Administration

The Clinton Administration’s plan for NMD, which it outlined in 1999, called for the deployment of 100 interceptor missiles at a single site in Alaska.² This system would have been designed to defend against a relatively limited threat of perhaps 20 missiles. Eventually the system might have expanded to 200-250 interceptors at one or more sites to defend against a larger and more sophisticated threat. It might also have included space-based sensors and components currently banned by the ABM Treaty. The Administration recognized that this site, and some of the technologies under consideration, would not have been consistent with the limits in the ABM Treaty. As a result, it participated in discussions with Russia in an effort to modify the ABM Treaty to permit a limited deployment. It would, however, have retained many of the central features of the Treaty that limit the capabilities of ABM systems.

¹ For the full text of the Treaty and a description of the process leading to its negotiation see Arms Control and Disarmament Agreements. Texts and Histories of the Negotiations. United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Washington, D.C. 1990.

² For a detailed discussion of the U.S. NMD program and policy towards the ABM Treaty, see U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, National Missile Defense: Issues for Congress, CRS Issue Brief IB10034. By Steven A. Hildreth and Amy F. Woolf.

President Clinton announced on September 1, 2000 that he had decided not to authorize deployment of an NMD system because he did not have “enough confidence in the technology, and the operational effectiveness of the entire NMD system.” In two of three tests, the defensive missile had failed to intercept its target. The Administration announced that it planned to continue with research and development on its NMD technologies, and that it would continue discussions with the Russians about the ABM Treaty. But the final decision on whether to begin NMD deployment would be left to Clinton’s successor.

Bush Administration

President Bush has emphasized that he places a high priority on defenses that could protect the United States, its forces, and its allies from ballistic missile attack. He outlined his Administration’s approach in a speech on May 1, 2001,³ when he indicated that “we can draw on already established technologies that might involve land-based and sea-based capabilities to intercept missiles in mid-course or after they re-enter the atmosphere.”⁴ During hearings before Congress in July 2001, Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz provided more details on the Administration’s missile defense program. He stated that the Pentagon would pursue a robust research and development program into a wide range of technologies that could be based on land, at sea, or in space. He stated that the Administration had not yet identified a specific architecture for its system because it would make use of the most promising technologies as soon as they were ready. Ultimately, though, the Administration is seeking to develop and deploy an integrated, layered system that can defend the United States, its forces, and allies from missiles of all ranges at all phases of their flight trajectories.

Administration officials acknowledged that many parts of its missile defense program would not be consistent with the terms of the ABM Treaty. They argued that the Treaty, and the nuclear strategy it embodied, should be replaced by a new framework for deterrence that combines both offensive and defensive capabilities. The Administration participated in consultations with Russia on a new strategic framework, but, when it was unable to convince Russia to withdraw from the Treaty with the United States, it announced that the United States would withdraw itself.

The Russian Response

Concerns about Strategic Stability and Arms Control

The dominant theme in Russia’s response to the U.S. approach to missile defenses and the ABM Treaty is the idea that the ABM Treaty is the “cornerstone of strategic stability” and that the U.S. deployment of missile defenses would undermine stability and upset arms control.⁵ According to this view, the Treaty, with its ban on widespread ballistic missile defenses, underscores the Cold War model of deterrence, where neither the United States nor Soviet Union could threaten an

³ The Bush Administration does use the phrase “missile defense” rather than the Clinton-era “national missile defense” to describe the systems currently under consideration. This is a broader concept for missile defense that could combine defenses against both shorter, medium, and longer-range missiles in an integrated defense architecture.

⁴ George W. Bush Delivers Remarks on Missile Defense. Transcript. Federal Document Clearing House. May 1, 2001.

⁵ Russia’s former defense minister, Igor Sergeyev, has said “the [1972] ABM Treaty, is the cornerstone for strategic stability and the basis for the system of international agreements in the sphere of the monitoring and control of weapons. Now it has been threatened due to the fact that the USA has decided upon the deployment of a national ABM system, which is prohibited by the [ABM] Treaty... If such a system is deployed in the USA, it [the treaty] will become meaningless. See Russian Defense Minister Sergeyev on Military Reform, Chechnya, ABM Defense. Vek. February 23, 20001. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20010301000351.

attack on the other without facing an overwhelming retaliatory strike. The assured destruction promised by this retaliatory strike meant that the strategic balance was stable, that neither side would risk an attack no matter how grave a crisis. Accordingly, the deployment of ballistic missile defenses that could protect all U.S. territory (as opposed to the limited defenses permitted by the Treaty) would undermine this concept of stability. If a nation could intercept missiles launched in retaliation, particularly if it had diminished their numbers in its initial strike, it might believe it could launch a first strike without fearing retaliation. Knowing this, the nation without the defensive system might conclude that it had to launch preemptively, before losing any of its forces in an initial attack. Under these circumstances, stability would be lost and a nation might have an incentive to launch first in a crisis.

Furthermore, Russian officials have argued that the ABM Treaty is the cornerstone of the entire network of agreements that reduce offensive nuclear weapons.⁶ The Treaty's limits on ballistic missile defenses allowed the United States and Soviet Union to accept limits and reductions in their offensive forces because they knew they could maintain an effective deterrent at lower levels when the offensive forces could not be blunted by defensive systems. Accordingly, if the United States were to abrogate the ABM Treaty to deploy ballistic missile defenses, Russia might feel compelled to abrogate agreements on offensive forces so that it could retain an arsenal of sufficient size to ensure that it could penetrate the U.S. ballistic missile defenses.

Finally, Russian critics note that the U.S. approach to missile defenses and the ABM Treaty would upset not only strategic stability between the United States and Russia, but also international strategic stability. They argue that other nations, such as China, might believe that their offensive forces would be undermined by U.S. defenses, and might feel compelled to expand their arsenals to ensure an effective retaliatory attack. But, if one nation, such as China, were to react this way, other nations might feel threatened and might react, themselves, by increasing their offensive military capabilities. Hence, the deployment of missile defenses and U.S. abrogation of the ABM Treaty could set off a new, threatening international arms race. Russian critics, and many critics of missile defense in the United States argue that, in the long run, the United States could become less secure with nationwide missile defenses than it is in its current more "vulnerable" condition.

The Clinton Administration sought to reassure Russia about its concerns for strategic stability. On several occasions, when President Clinton met with President Yeltsin or President Putin, he signed statements and declarations acknowledging that the ABM Treaty remained the cornerstone of strategic stability. At their summit meeting in June 2000, Presidents Clinton and Putin signed a Joint Statement On Principles of Strategic Stability. In this document, the Presidents declared that "They agree on the essential contribution of the ABM Treaty to reductions in offensive forces, and reaffirm their commitment to that Treaty as the cornerstone of strategic stability."⁷ At the same time, the United States sought to convince Russia that the Treaty could serve this purpose

⁶ Russia's President Putin has said, "People must realize that the mutual reduction of strategic attack weapons—the most dangerous of all nuclear weapons—is possible only when the ABM Treaty continues to hold. Scrapping it would make a further reduction of strategic attack weapons according to START-I impossible. START-II would not come into force either, as it would be impossible to conclude START-III, aimed at talking about the radical reduction of nuclear arsenals. This blow would also affect other agreements that are of fundamental, global importance: the NPT, and the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty... Russia will be forced to look for an alternative to end its commitments not only regarding START, but also the agreement on intermediate-range and short-range missiles, the conclusion of which is linked to the legal and military framework of the START-II-ABM process." See Gafron, Georg and Kai Diekmann. *Russia is Still a World Power*. Interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin Hamburg Welt am Sonntag. June 11, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document EUP20000611000121.

⁷ Joint Statement By the Presidents of the United States of America and The Russian Federation on Principles of Strategic Stability. The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. June 4, 2000.

even if it were modified or amended to allow the deployment of a limited NMD.⁸ In addition, the Clinton Administration argued that the changes it sought in the ABM Treaty would permit only a limited NMD system that would address the emerging threat from “rogue” nations and that the system would not be capable enough to intercept the larger numbers of missiles that Russia would possess, even as its forces declined in the coming decade.

Concerns about the Scope and Intent of NMD

Differing Threat Assessments

Russian officials have agreed with the U.S. view that ballistic missile proliferation could pose a problem and introduce new missile threats to both nations. The Joint Statement on Principles of Strategic Stability, signed after the June 2000 summit, stated that the Presidents agreed “that the international community faces a dangerous and growing threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, including missiles and missile technologies...” Furthermore, the Presidents agreed that “this new threat represents a potentially significant change in the strategic situation and international security environment.”⁹ In an interview held shortly before the summit, President Putin proposed that the United States and Russia cooperate on the development of a “boost-phase” theater missile defense system that could be based near “rogue” nations to address this emerging threat.¹⁰

However, Russian officials disagree with the U.S. view that missile proliferation and the potential missile capabilities of “rogue” nations pose a significant or immediate threat to the United States. In an interview with the Russian press, President Putin acknowledged that “such threats, theoretically, in principle, [could] emerge one day.” But he went on to state that “we do not believe that there are such threats now nor that they are coming from any specific states.”¹¹ Consequently, President Putin did not agree with the U.S. view that these emerging threats justified the U.S. proposals for changes to the ABM Treaty and the deployment of an NMD system.¹² Moreover, Russian officials claim that, even if “rogue” nations could threaten the United States with long-range missiles, the overwhelming power of U.S. offensive forces would deter such an attack. Russia’s former Defense Minister, Igor Sergeyev, outlined this view when he stated:

“the development of ICBMs entailed a colossal strain on the economy even for giants like the USSR and the United States. So assertions that ICBMs will appear in the near future in the possession of Third World states that do not possess a sound economy or the relevant technologies appear very lightweight and unfounded. Indeed, even if we imagine the purely theoretical situation where such missiles will become part of the armory, the nuclear

⁸ Secretary of Defense Cohen noted that, although the Presidents agreed that the Treaty remained a cornerstone of strategic stability, it was not a static document. He pointed out that “the treaty allows amendments to fit new strategic realities, such as the emerging new threats we face.” DOD New Briefing, Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Presenter. June 9, 2000.

⁹ Joint Statement By the Presidents. Op cit.

¹⁰ Grier, Peter. Putin’s “Star Wars” Lite: Could it Fly? Christian Science Monitor. June 8, 2000. p. 2.

¹¹ Shchedrov, Oleg. Putin sees U.S. missile concerns, but no threat now. Reuters. July 12, 2000.

¹² “The situation indeed has changed, but not enough to break down the system of strategic stability that has formed by emasculating the ABM Treaty. It is possible to take steps to counter the proliferation of missiles and missile technologies without going beyond the framework of the ABM Treaty and by acting above all by means of political and diplomatic methods.” See Putin’s Nuclear Weapons Reduction Proposals. Moscow, Krasnaya Zvezda, November 14, 2000.

deterrence factor that demonstrated its effectiveness back in the Cold War years will still apply to those countries.”¹³

Thus, Minister Sergeyev, and others in Russia have concluded that, if the emerging missile threats in “rogue” nations do not really threaten U.S. territory, then a U.S. NMD system cannot really be directed against those threats. Instead, the United States must be seeking to develop a missile defense system that can contribute to its global drive for domination and undermine Russia’s nuclear deterrent.

“The results of our military-technical analysis indicate that the threat of the carrying out of a strike against the USA by intercontinental ballistic missiles launched by so-called “problem” states, which the USA sets forth as the primary reason for the development of its national ABM system, is, in reality, not being considered [i.e., it is not the real reason for the development of the national ABM system]. We do not see any [real] motives for the deployment of this national ABM system other than the striving of the USA to acquire strategic domination in the world. We are deeply convinced that such a deployment would be primarily directed against Russia.”¹⁴

Skepticism about “Limited NMD”

Many Russian officials and analysts did not believe that the United States planned to limit its missile defense system, even under the Clinton Administration. Some argued that the United States would not spend more than \$100 billion dollars to develop and deploy a missile defense system, then limit it to a capability to intercept only 10-20 missiles.¹⁵ The Clinton Administration contributed to this disbelief when it stated that it would seek modifications to the ABM Treaty in two phases; the first would simply allow the deployment of a single NMD site in Alaska and the upgrades to some early warning radars. In the second phase, the Clinton Administration planned to request an increase in the permitted number of interceptor missiles and the addition of space-based sensors. Some Russians suspected that additional phases, with additional “minor modifications” would have followed, and that, eventually, the U.S. approach would have loosened the Treaty enough to permit the deployment of more extensive defenses. The Bush Administration also insists that its missile program would be limited to address only the threat from rogue nations. But the Administration has outlined plans to develop and deploy a robust, layered system, as opposed to the limited land-based system considered by the Clinton Administration, which could provide a more capable defense against Russian missiles.

Russian analysts calculated that, even with the Clinton Administration’s limited defensive system, the United States could expand its missile defense capabilities by upgrading its early warning and command and control structures, then quickly adding to the number of deployed interceptors. Former Defense Minister Sergeyev outlined this concern in an interview with the Russian press. He noted that “It is not the quantity of interceptor missiles that determines the combat potential of any antimissile defense system. First and foremost, it depends on the system’s information components which ensure the acquisition and tracking of targets, the ability to distinguish real

¹³ Tretyakov, Vitaliy. The United States is Destroying Strategic Stability. Interview with Russian Federation Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000242.

¹⁴ Russian Defense Minister Sergeyev on Military Reform, Chechnya, ABM Defense. *Vek*. February 23, 20001. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20010301000351.

¹⁵ Russian military chief says NMD will destroy strategic stability. *Itar-Tass*. February 16, 2001. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20010216000210.

warheads from dummy targets.”¹⁶ A Russian analyst, Alexander Pikayev, also noted that the United States could easily expand its NMD capabilities once it had developed the space-based sensors that would improve targeting and tracking capabilities. He stated that, once it had developed and deployed these capabilities, “it would be easy for the U.S. to produce and deploy large numbers of interceptors.”¹⁷

In April 2000, Pentagon officials presented Russia’s Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov with a detailed briefing about the capabilities of the radars planned for the U.S. NMD system in an effort to convince him that the system would not pose a threat to Russia’s strategic deterrent forces.¹⁸ But Russian officials were not convinced.¹⁹ The Bush Administration also provided Russian officials with detailed briefings on the new U.S. missile defense program in early August 2001.

Consequently, with their doubts about the U.S. assessments of emerging ballistic missile threats and their doubts about the limited nature of a prospective U.S. NMD system, many Russian officials and analysts concluded that “the so-called limited nature of the U.S. NMD system is based on the desire to obscure the very essence of the system. The NMD is only a stage in the development and deployment of a full-scale ABM system.”²⁰ Former Defense Minister Sergeyev stated that the Clinton Administration’s limited NMD would be the “first step toward the future emergence of a multifunctional global system for combating all types of ballistic, aerodynamic, and space targets and subsequently also surface and land targets. This comprehensive defense system will be directed first and foremost against the deterrent potential of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China.”²¹

The Threat to Russia’s Deterrent

Russian analysts have argued that the United States could undermine Russia’s strategic nuclear deterrent, and possibly acquire a disarming first strike capability, with even a relatively limited missile defense capability. First, they note that Russia’s arsenal of strategic offensive nuclear weapons is likely to decline sharply over the next decade, to perhaps fewer than 1,500 warheads, as older weapons are retired and financial constraints preclude the acquisition of newer weapons. But the United States could maintain a much larger offensive nuclear force of several thousand nuclear weapons, even under prospective arms control scenarios. In addition, NATO enlargement, the U.S. advantage in anti-submarine warfare, and the U.S. advantage in precision-guided conventional weapons, such as the sea-launched Tomahawk cruise missile, provide the United States and its allies with the ability to conduct conventional attacks on strategic targets in Russia

¹⁶ Tretyakov, Vitaliy. The United States is Destroying Strategic Stability. Interview with Russian Federation Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000242.

¹⁷ Pikayev, Alexander. ABM Treaty Revision: A Challenge to Russian Security. *Disarmament Diplomacy*. Issue No. 44.

¹⁸ Myers, Steven Lee. Russians Get Briefing on U.S. Defense Plan. *New York Times*. April 29, 2000.

¹⁹ “The argument that the US NMD system will be “limited” in nature and therefore represents no danger to the Russian strategic deterrent forces does not convince us” See, Tretyakov, Vitaliy. The United States is Destroying Strategic Stability. Interview with Russian Federation Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000242.

²⁰ Russian military chief says NMD will destroy strategic stability. *Itar-Tass*. February 16, 2001. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20010216000210.

²¹ Tretyakov, Vitaliy. The United States is Destroying Strategic Stability. Interview with Russian Federation Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000242.

in a comprehensive first strike. If the United States launched an attack against Russia with its conventional and nuclear forces, and destroyed a large percentage of Russia's diminished nuclear forces, a few hundred missile defense interceptors could be sufficient to intercept Russia's retaliatory strike. Hence, according to this argument, even a limited missile defense system could "undermine strategic stability" and contribute to U.S. efforts to "achieve radical changes in the military balance."²²

Russian analysts also note that China is likely to react to the deployment of a U.S. NMD system by expanding its military capabilities and its offensive missile forces. One Russian analyst, Alexander Pikayev, has stated that China has already adopted a \$10 billion package for a new nuclear buildup in reaction to U.S. plans to deploy an NMD system together with a TMD system in the Western Pacific, and that China would have to significantly increase the size of its missile force to maintain the credibility of its deterrent in the face of a U.S. NMD. But, according to Pikayev and other Russian analyst, these weapons could pose as much of a threat to Russia as they could to the United States: "Currently, the predominance of Chinese conventional weapons vis-a-vis the vast but sparsely populated Russian Far East is balanced by Moscow's superiority in nuclear weapons. China's nuclear build-up might considerably erode this superiority, further weakening Russia's position in the Far East."²³ According to Pikayev, this imbalance with Chinese forces might compel Russia to withdraw from the 1987 Intermediate Forces Treaty.

Possible Military Responses

Hence, in spite of U.S. claims to the contrary, many Russian officials and analysts appear to believe that U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and deployment of a nationwide missile defense system would undermine the existing framework of arms control agreements, upset international strategic stability, incite new arms races, and threaten the credibility of Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent. Several Russian officials have declared that, if the United States were to follow this path, Russia would feel compelled to withdraw from a range of arms control agreements so that it could deploy the military forces that it would need to offset the U.S. threat to its nuclear deterrent. These military responses could include changes in the deployment of several different types of nuclear weapons.

Deploy Multiple Warheads on New ICBMs

The 1993 START II Treaty, which has not yet entered into force, would have banned the deployment of land-based strategic ballistic missiles with multiple warheads (MIRVed ICBMs). Under this agreement, Russia would have had to eliminate its 10-warhead SS-18 ICBMs and 10-warhead SS-24 ICBMs. It also would have to reduce, from 6 to one, the number of warheads deployed on its SS-19 ICBMs. This would leave Russia with an ICBM force that consisted of single warhead SS-25 and SS-27 missiles and around 100 aging SS-19 missiles.

Even without Treaty implementation, Russia is likely to eliminate many of the older multiple warhead missiles. The SS-18s, which have long been considered the backbone of Russia's strategic nuclear force, are likely to reach the end of their service-lives by the end of the decade.

²² Rogov, Sergey Mikhaylovich. *Reliance on the Nuclear Shield: Not Unilateral Reduction, but a Search for Compromise Solutions With the United States Will Ensure Russia's National Security*. August 4, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000810000216. See also, Pikayav, Alexander. *ABM Treaty Revision: A Challenge to Russian Security*. Disarmament Diplomacy. Issue No. 44.

²³ Pikayav, Alexander. *ABM Treaty Revision: A Challenge to Russian Security*. Disarmament Diplomacy. Issue No. 44.

Russia would find it hard to maintain these forces because the missiles were produced at a plant in Ukraine, which is no longer making ICBMs for Russia, and Russia lacks the economic resources needed to build a new plant to support these missiles in Russia. However, if it were not bound by the START II ban on MIRVed ICBMs, Russia could deploy its older single-warhead SS-25 ICBM and new single-warhead SS-27 ICBM with 3 warheads.²⁴ Alternatively, Russia could develop new types of decoys and penetration aids for these missiles, to complicate U.S. efforts to intercept them with its missile defense system.

Russia currently has 360 SS-25 missiles and 30 operational SS-27 missiles. The SS-27 missiles were expected to replace the SS-25 missiles in Russia's force. Russia is currently producing fewer than 10 of these missiles per year, but had hoped to produce up to 30 missiles per year later this decade. Many experts believed Russia would eventually produce 300 SS-27 missiles, but with the low production rates currently in place, this number is likely to be lower. Even if each of these missiles were to carry 3 warheads, Russia's ICBM force would likely include fewer than 1000 warheads by the end of the decade. This contrasts with more than 3,500 warheads on Russia's ICBM force now. So, even if Russia were to abrogate START I and set aside START II, it would probably institute sharp reductions in the size of its ICBM force.

Deploy new intermediate range missiles

Several Russian officials have also suggested that Russia might abrogate the 1987 INF Treaty and deploy new shorter-range and intermediate-range missiles.²⁵ As was noted above, Russia could pursue this option in an effort to offset any advantages that China might acquire if it expanded its nuclear forces in response to a U.S. NMD. But the threat to deploy new missiles in this range can also be seen as a part of Russia's attempt to convince U.S. allies in Europe to join it in opposing U.S. NMD plans.²⁶ In discussing this option, Vladimir Yakovlev, the former Commander of Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces noted that "in the event of the repudiation of the INF Treaty, Europe once again falls hostage to a clash between the nuclear superpowers. The United States is planning to [maintain] a 100,000-strong grouping on the continent of Europe with command and control posts and the relevant infrastructure and all this is an extremely worthy target for Russian missiles."²⁷

Russia could reportedly produce new intermediate range missiles in a relatively short amount of time. According to one official, the Moscow Institute of Heat and Engineering, Russia's leading design bureau for ballistic missiles, has already prepared blueprints and technical documents for the system and could transfer them to the Votkinsk missile assembly facility as soon as a decision was made to begin producing missiles.²⁸ Nevertheless, it is unlikely that it could produce large numbers of these missiles in a short period of time. The Votkinsk Missile Assembly facility is the same location where Russia produced the SS-25 missiles and is currently producing the SS-27 missile, at a rate of fewer than 10 per year. Economic constraints would make it very difficult for Russia to expand production at this facility. Hence, any increase in the production of

²⁴ Dolinin, Aleksandr. *Russia's Security Is Reliably Guaranteed*. Interview with Strategic Missile Troops Commander-in-Chief, General of the Army Vladimir Yakovlev. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 5, 2000. Translated in FBIS CEP20000705000396.

²⁵ Dolinin, Aleksandr. *Russia's Security Is Reliably Guaranteed*. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 5, 2000. Translated in FBIS CEP20000705000396.

²⁶ Saradzhyan, Simon. *U.S. NMD Effort Fueling Russia's New Missile Plan*. *Defense News*. July 10, 2000. p. 1.

²⁷ Odnokolenko, Oleg. *Wait For a Response. Asymmetrical Response. Russia Could Be Embroiled in Ruinous Arms Race*. *Segodnya*, June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000085.

²⁸ Saradzhyan, Simon. *U.S. NMD Effort Fueling Russia's New Missile Plan*. *Defense News*. July 10, 2000. p. 1.

intermediate-range missiles could come at the expense of the already-low production rate for SS-27 missiles.

Redeploy shorter-range nuclear delivery systems

During the early 1990s, the United States and Soviet Union both withdrew from deployment many of their shorter-range nuclear delivery systems. They did this unilaterally, without any negotiated agreements and without any formal monitoring or verification provisions. For Russia, these weapons came out of deployment areas in the other former Soviet republics and near Russia's borders. Many were consolidated at storage areas within Russia. Some analysts in the United States have expressed concerns that Russia might return some of these weapons to deployment or to storage areas closer to Russia's western borders. The Commander of Russia's Strategic Rocket forces indicated that this was a possibility when he stated that Russia could also institute "changes to the principles of employment and deployment of operational-tactical nuclear weapons" as a part of its response to U.S. deployment of NMD.²⁹

This type of response would not give Russia any new capabilities to threaten the United States or to penetrate U.S. missile defenses. However, it would be consistent with Russia's new national security strategy, which allows for the possible use of non-strategic nuclear weapons in response to conventional military attacks on Russia. Most experts believe that this change in Russia's strategy is a response to the degradation in Russia's conventional military capabilities, and its growing concern about the military implications of NATO enlargement. In addition, the threat of new nuclear deployments near Europe could be a part of Russia's efforts to draw support from the United States' allies in Europe for Russia's opposition to missile defense. According to this school of thought, the more threatened the Europeans feel by Russia's potential responses, the more likely they are to pressure the United States to alter its policy on missile defense.

Most experts agree that Russia will not win the support of U.S. allies in Europe, even if it threatens to redeploy shorter-range or intermediate-range nuclear forces near its western borders. However, if Russia intends to make these changes anyway, in response to its diminished conventional capabilities, then the collapse of arms control in response to U.S. missile defense policy could provide a convenient excuse.

Russian Alternatives

Russian officials have stated that, instead of relying on missile defenses that could upset stability and undermine arms control, the two sides should rely on "an umbrella based on diplomacy"³⁰ and has offered proposals for measures that the international community might adopt to address the threat posed by missile proliferation. The Clinton Administration did not dismiss the Russian approach, but also did not accept it as an alternative to the U.S. approach. Then-Secretary of Defense Cohen noted, after the June 2000 summit between Presidents Clinton and Putin, that the response to missile proliferation should include both diplomatic efforts to stop proliferation and defensive systems to protect the nations from possible attack.³¹

²⁹ Dolinin, Aleksandr. *Russia's Security Is Reliably Guaranteed*. Interview with Strategic Missile Troops Commander-in-Chief, General of the Army Vladimir Yakovlev. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, July 5, 2000. Translated in FBIS CEP20000705000396.

³⁰ Williams, Daniel. *Russia Wants Political Shield; Moscow Says Diplomacy, Not Technology, Key to Missile Defense*. *Washington Post*. June 14, 2000. p. A34.

³¹ DOD News Briefing, Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Presenter. June 9, 2000.

The Global Missile and Missile Technology Non-Proliferation Control System (GCS)

In June 1999, Russia proposed that the international community establish a Global Missile and Missile Technology Non-proliferation Control System (GCS). Russia advocated this regime as “component part of the global regime of the non-proliferation of missiles and missile technologies.”³² It would, in part, complement the Missile Technology Control Regime – which regulates the supply side of missile technologies – by regulating the behavior of nations that might seek to acquire ballistic missile technologies; and, would operate under U.N. auspices. It would also provide incentives to nations so that they would forgo their own missile arsenals. Russian officials said the goal was to present an alternative to NMD that maximizes “peaceful” diplomatic and political efforts to address concerns about missile proliferation.³³

Specifically, Russia proposed that the international community create a pre-launch and post-launch notification launch-monitoring regime to build transparency into ballistic missile developments. Nations that participated in this regime would gain an understanding of missile developments in neighboring countries and might feel less threatened, and therefore, less compelled to develop their own missiles. The regime would also include a global monitoring system to provide a “mechanism for detection of missile launches for any purpose.” This monitoring system, which could build on the system under development by the United States and Russia, might also ease tensions and uncertainties about ballistic missile developments. For nations who agreed to forgo the development of their own ballistic missiles, the Russian proposal offered security guarantees, with the international community coming to a nation’s assistance if it were attacked by ballistic missiles. Finally, the proposal contained incentives for countries to forgo the development of ballistic missiles.³⁴

The Clinton Administration responded cautiously to the Russian proposal. It reportedly saw some positive elements, but also had concerns that the discussions might be used as a forum to criticize U.S. NMD plans and undermine U.S. efforts to win support for missile defenses.³⁵ Furthermore, although the United States supported the principle of a multilateral launch notification regime, it preferred to focus its attention on the bilateral U.S.-Russian effort. It believed it would be easier to make the Joint Data Exchange Center available to other countries once it was operational than to conduct multilateral negotiations to establish the center.

Russia has held two organizational meetings on its proposal for a GCS. At the first conference, in March 2000, Russia outlined its plan for the regime. At the second, in February 2001, the participants talked about an international code of conduct on missile technology transfers that had been proposed at the MTCR meetings in 2000. This code would affect the demand side, placing limits on nations seeking to advance their missile capabilities. The United States has not participated actively in the GCS forum. The U.S. embassy sent an observer to the first meeting but no U.S. official attended the second. The Clinton Administration agreed to try to integrate the GCS proposal into the existing MTCR framework, but it did not support the creation of a separate regime outside of the MTCR framework.³⁶

³² Ivanov Comments on START-3 Negotiations, Moscow Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, September 2, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000905000219.

³³ U.S. Adopting “Wait and See” Approach to Russian Missile Initiative. Inside the Pentagon, April 16, 2000. p. 1.

³⁴ U.S. Adopting “Wait and See” Approach to Russian Missile Initiative. Inside the Pentagon, April 16, 2000. p. 1.

³⁵ U.S. Adopting “Wait and See” Approach to Russian Missile Initiative. Inside the Pentagon, April 16, 2000. p. 1.

³⁶ Russia holds Second GCS Conference. Arms Control Today. March 2001. p. 34.

Cooperation on Theater Ballistic Missile Defenses in Europe

The Russian Proposal

Russia's President Vladimir Putin first proposed that Russia cooperate with nations in Europe in developing defenses against theater ballistic missiles in June 2000, shortly after his summit meeting with President Clinton. He referred to this concept as "a regionally-based missile defense system" that would not require any changes in the ABM Treaty.³⁷ Putin's initial, general proposal was followed by meetings between NATO officials and Russia's Minister of Defense, Igor Sergeyev, later in June. At that time, General Sergeyev reportedly outlined the framework for cooperation that Russia had in mind. He said that possible areas of cooperation could include:

- joint assessment of the nature and scale of missile proliferation and possible missile threats;
- joint development of a concept for a pan-European nonstrategic missile defense system and of a procedure for its creation and deployment;
- joint creation of a pan-European multilateral missile launch warning center;
- the holding of joint command and staff exercises;
- the conducting of joint research and experiments;
- joint development of nonstrategic missile defense systems;
- creation of nonstrategic missile defense formations for joint or coordinated actions to protect peacekeeping forces or the civilian population.³⁸

Russia's second proposal was included in a nine-page paper entitled "Phases of European Missile Defense" that was presented to NATO's Secretary General Lord George Robertson in Moscow in February 2001. This paper reportedly added details to the general outline that Russia had first presented in June 2000. One key difference was that, instead of hinting at the use of boost-phase defenses, as Russia had done in June 2000, the new paper indicated that the defensive system would rely on more conventional terminal defenses in transportable units that could be moved to counter specific threats during a crisis.³⁹ But the rest of the proposal remained essentially the same. Russia and the European nations would first cooperate in a forum that would review and assess emerging ballistic missile threats. They could then establish a joint early warning center to process data and share information on missile launches. These nations could also jointly develop, build and deploy a non-strategic anti-ballistic missile system that could be ready for rapid deployment to any area in Europe where the threat of missile attack might arise.⁴⁰ According to some reports, the plan was "long on generalities and short on specifics." It provided "little technical evaluation and no cost estimates, development timetables, or organizational structures." It simply represented a "theoretical basis for how a mobile European-based system might be developed using Russian technology."⁴¹

³⁷ Europe Urged by Putin to reject U.S. Missile Plan. *London Times*, June 12, 2000.

³⁸ Tretyakov, Vitaliy. The United States is Destroying Strategic Stability. Interview with Russian Federation Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000242.

³⁹ Baker, Peter and Susan B. Glasser. Russia Details Anti-Missile Alternative. *Washington Post*. February 21, 2001. p 16.

⁴⁰ Russia Sees Rapid Anti-Missile Force. *New York Times on the Web*. April 10, 2001.

⁴¹ Baker, Peter. Russia's Skeletal Missile Plan. *Outline of European Shield Brings Little Response from the West*.

Russian officials emphasized that Russia had the technology, industrial base, and testing facilities needed to develop and produce a mobile non-strategic ballistic missile defense system. They also noted that Russia had the early warning network needed to monitor and respond to ballistic missile threats that might emerge from nations to the south of Europe.⁴² The paper presented to Lord Robertson did not identify the technologies that could be used in the system, but it did contain a diagram, and analysts who reviewed the material concluded that Russia intended to use its S-300 and S-400 air-defense systems.⁴³ The S-300 reportedly includes a sophisticated set of tracking devices and rockets that can reportedly intercept up to six missiles or aircraft at one time.⁴⁴ These systems are reportedly based on the SA-10 air-defense system that the Soviet Union first deployed in the late 1960s. The system accomplished some successful intercepts of theater-range ballistic missiles in the mid-1990s. Jane's Strategic Weapons Systems attributes this system with capabilities similar to the U.S. Patriot system, which can intercept shorter-range ballistic missiles.⁴⁵ But Russian sources claim the S-400 version will be able to intercept missiles with ranges up to 3,500 kilometers. This version reportedly entered production in mid-2000 and may become operational in 2001.⁴⁶

The U.S. and European Reactions

When Russia first offered its proposal for a European missile defense system, the Clinton Administration said the idea could not serve as a substitute for a U.S. NMD. Specifically, Secretary of Defense Cohen stated that it would leave the United States and Europe vulnerable to attacks from long-range rockets being developed by countries such as Iran and North Korea. Therefore, it could not protect the United States or its allies from the full range of emerging threats.⁴⁷ To be acceptable to the United States, a missile defense system would have to "protect all of the United States territory." Therefore, the Russian suggestion for a cooperative system with Europe "could supplement, but not substitute for the system that the U.S. is developing."⁴⁸

The European reaction to Russia's initial proposal was also "guarded" According to a European diplomat, "There is a lot of skepticism because this would seem to be another attempt by Moscow to drive a wedge between Europe and the United States."⁴⁹ Many analysts also considered the proposal to be a "clumsy" attempt by Moscow to draw the European nations away from the United States and to increase pressure on the Clinton Administration to defer missile defense deployment and remain within the ABM Treaty.

The reaction to Russia's February 2001 paper that added details to the June 2000 proposal was not as critical. Officials from the both Bush Administration and NATO noted that Russia's focus

Washington Post. April 3, 2001.

⁴² Sorokina, Svetlana. Interview with Vladimir Yakovlev, Commander in Chief of the Russian Strategic Missile Troops. From the "Hero of the Day" program, June 22, 2000. Translated in FBIS Document CEP20000622000323.

⁴³ Baker, Peter. Russia's Skeletal Missile Plan. Outline of European Shield Brings Little Response from the West. Washington Post. April 3, 2001.

⁴⁴ Hoagland, Jim. Putin's Rocket Challenge. Washington Post. March 18, 2001. p. B7.

⁴⁵ Lennox, Duncan, editor. Jane's Strategic Weapons Systems. Issue 33. August 2000. pp. 302-305.

⁴⁶ Missile Troops Begin Testing of S-400 Defensive Missile System. Moscow TV. June 21, 2000.

⁴⁷ Drozdak, William. U.S. Rejects Russian Plan for Joint Missile Defense. Cohen Says Proposal Fails to Shield Against Long-Range Strikes. Washington Post. June 10, 2000, p. 17.

⁴⁸ DOD News Briefing. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, Presenter. June 9, 2000.

⁴⁹ Drozdak, William. U.S. Rejects Russian Plan for Joint Missile Defense. Cohen Says Proposal Fails to Shield Against Long-Range Strikes. Washington Post. June 10, 2000, p. 17.

on theater missile defenses for Europe indicated that Russia appeared to agree with the United States that missile proliferation posed a threat and agreed that missile defense systems, as well as diplomacy and arms control, could play a role in addressing the threat.⁵⁰ Some analysts suggested that a change in tone that accompanied Russia's second proposal, and the fact that it came less than a month into the Bush Administration, signaled that Russia realized that the new President was more committed to the deployment of missile defenses and that Russia's opposition could be futile. Instead, by offering more details on the Russian alternative, Russia could be seeking to maintain a dialogue with the United States on missile defenses.⁵¹

U.S. Response to the Russian Reaction

Clinton Administration

The Clinton Administration sought to address Russian concerns about the U.S. plans for missile defense by convincing Russia that the ABM Treaty would remain largely in place, that missile defenses would remain relatively limited, and that they would be directed against possible small-scale attacks from "rogue" nations. As was noted above, the Clinton Administration agreed with the Russian view that the ABM Treaty was the cornerstone of strategic stability. It proposed only modest changes to the Treaty, so that it could deploy a limited ground based site in Alaska, rather than North Dakota, and so that it could upgrade radar capabilities. It acknowledged that the United States might seek further modifications in the future, but it never suggested that it would deploy a robust, layered defense that included sea-based or space-based interceptors.

Administration officials also met frequently with Russian officials to discuss U.S. NMD plans and to seek Russian agreement on changes to the ABM Treaty. Although these discussions proved futile, and Russia offered little more than a simple "no" in response to U.S. initiatives, this effort appeared to indicate that the United States placed a high priority on reaching agreement with Russia before it proceeded with its missile defense plans. Administration officials indicated that the United States would consider withdrawing from the ABM Treaty if Russia failed to accept modifications but Russia apparently never believed that the Clinton Administration would take this step. This view may have contributed to Russia's reluctance to accept or even discuss the U.S. proposals.

Bush Administration

The Bush Administration has altered sharply the U.S. approach towards addressing Russia's concerns. First, the Administration does not support the view that the ABM Treaty remains the cornerstone of strategic stability. To the contrary, Secretaries Rumsfeld and Powell stated that the Treaty is "ancient history" and "not relevant in the current strategic framework." In his speech on May 1, 2001, President Bush said the United States must "leave behind the constraints of the ABM Treaty" and, instead, "replace this treaty with a new framework that reflects a clear and clean break from the past..."

Second, the Bush Administration has not accepted the limited approach to missile defenses that had been pursued by the Clinton Administration. Although the Administration insists that its defensive systems will also be directed against "rogue" nation threats and accidental launches, it

⁵⁰ Gordon, Michael R. Moscow Signaling A Change in Tone on Missile Defense. New York Times, February 22, 2001. P. 1.

⁵¹ Gordon, Michael R. Moscow Signaling A Change in Tone on Missile Defense. New York Times, February 22, 2001. P. 1.

has not pledged to keep that system limited to a few hundred interceptors based at one or a few sites on land. Instead, the Administration has pledged to develop a “layered” defense that will include components based on land, at sea, and in space. Unlike the Clinton Administration, and possibly because it has not yet settled on an architecture, the Bush Administration has not yet sought to convince Russia that the technologies included in U.S. missile defense plans could not intercept a deliberate Russian attack and would not undermine Russia’s deterrent. Instead, the Administration has offered verbal assurances that it does not view Russia as an adversary, and, therefore, would not direct U.S. missile defense efforts against Russian forces.

In late July 2001, Presidents Bush and Putin agreed that the two nations would hold discussions on their offensive nuclear weapons and missile defenses, and seek to reach agreement on a new strategic framework. These discussions began in early August, when Russian officials received a detailed briefing on U.S. technologies and the Bush Administration plans for missile defenses. But the Bush Administration did not view these discussions as the opening round in a formal negotiating process that might produce a new treaty limiting offensive nuclear weapons or missile defenses. Instead, the United States wanted Russia to agree to set aside the ABM Treaty, or to have both parties withdraw from it together, so that the United States could proceed with missile defense.

Russia, on the other hand, preferred to keep some form of Treaty regime in place. It acknowledged that the world has changed and that the relationship with the United States has changed, but it continued to place a value on the predictability and formality offered by arms control agreements. Reports indicate that it may have been willing to permit more extensive testing of missile defense systems, and to relax the definitions in the Agreed Statements on Demarcation so that the United States can test TMD systems against a wider range of targets. It also sought details about how the U.S. missile defense program would be constrained by the ABM Treaty, so that the two sides could devise amendments to relax the relevant constraints. In essence, Russia approached the Bush Administration with a response that would have been acceptable, and possibly even effective, during the Clinton Administration, when the United States was willing to modify the ABM Treaty. But the Bush Administration did not offer any proposals for amendments because it did not want any constraints to remain on U.S. missile defense plans.

Issues for Congress

Members of Congress have expressed a range of opinions about the Bush Administration’s approach to missile defense and arms control.⁵² Congress did not vote directly on binding legislation that would address the question of whether the United States should withdraw from the ABM Treaty. It does, however, have annual opportunities to review the Administration’s plans for missile defenses when it reviews the Administration’s budget requests during the annual authorization and appropriations process. These debates may be dominated by questions about the costs and technical feasibility of U.S. missile defense plans. But the Members may also address some questions about the implications of these plans for the U.S. relationship with Russia and the future of the arms control process.

⁵² See, for example, Biden, Joseph R., Jr. *Missile Defense Will Make Us Less Secure*, Wall Street Journal, May 3, 2001; John Kyl. *ABM Treaty Must Go*. USA Today May 2, 2001. p. 12; and Alison Mitchell, *Senate Democrats Square off with Bush Over Missile Plan*. New York Times May 3, 2001. p. 1.

Will Russia continue to cooperate on offensive arms reductions?

Many critics of U.S. missile defense policy consider Russia's threat to withdraw from a range of offensive arms control agreements as a key threat to U.S. security. They note that these agreements not only reduce the size of the only arsenal that can threaten U.S. survival, but they also include monitoring and verification provisions that bring predictability, transparency, and cooperation to the U.S.-Russian nuclear relationship. Others, however, argue that the benefits of arms control are not worth the cost of remaining vulnerable to missile attack. They note that Russian nuclear forces are likely to decline sharply during the next decade under economic constraints, with or without arms control. They also note that the United States and Russia have signed a new Treaty that would reduce their offensive nuclear forces, so that Russia's withdrawal from older Treaties would not undermine U.S. security.⁵³ Finally, they contend that the United States and Russia have established a mature, cooperative relationship on nuclear weapons issues and that the transparency and predictability from this relationship could continue even if the countries were not monitoring compliance with arms control treaties.

Will Russia continue to cooperate in non-proliferation and threat reduction activities?

Some critics of U.S. missile defense policy argue that Russia might cease its cooperation in a range of other policy areas if the United States were to withdraw from the ABM Treaty. They point to Russia's expanding nuclear cooperation with Iran as evidence that Russia could do serious harm to U.S. national security if it chose to pursue a less restrained nonproliferation policy. Some also contend that Russia might withdraw from participation in the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, where the United States provides financial and technical assistance in securing and eliminating Russian nuclear weapons and materials. Without U.S. participation, these weapons and materials might be lost, stolen, or sold to nations seeking their own nuclear weapons. Some believe these possibilities could pose a greater threat to U.S. security than the emerging missile threats that would be the target of U.S. missile defenses.

Others, however, doubt that Russian policies in these areas would be linked to U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. They note that Russia has been cooperating with Iran in nuclear developments and military sales for many years, and that these activities are driven more by Russia's interest in earning hard currency than by Russia's interest in undermining U.S. non-proliferation objectives. Some also argue that Russia would not be likely to cut off cooperation under the Nunn-Lugar programs because it recognizes the threats posed by the potential loss of nuclear weapons and materials and it would be unable to safeguard and eliminate aging nuclear weapons without U.S. assistance.

Will Russia convince other nations to support its objections to U.S. missile defense policies?

Russia conducted a world-wide public relations campaign in an effort to win the support of other countries in its opposition to U.S. missile defense policies. It joined with China on numerous occasions to criticize U.S. missile defenses as a threat to international stability and it has sought to win support from U.S. allies in Europe by promising to cooperate on the development of theater missile defenses for Europe. It has also issued declarations with many other nations in support of the ABM Treaty and opposition to U.S. missile defense plans.

⁵³ See CRS Report RL31448, *Nuclear Arms Control: The Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty*, by Amy F. Woolf.

Some critics of U.S. missile defense plans argue that the United States might find itself isolated in the international community if it continues to pursue missile defenses and withdraws from the ABM Treaty. They note that most countries are at least uncomfortable, if not outright opposed, to this policy. Some fear that these nations might interfere with or complicate other areas of U.S. policy if they feel that the United States has upset the international order with its pursuit of missile defenses.

The Bush Administration pledged to consult with U.S. allies before it proceeded with missile defense, in part to ease their concerns and reduce their resistance. Supporters of missile defense deployments generally support consultation with U.S. allies, although some have expressed concern that the Administration's emphasis on these consultations could leave U.S. policy vulnerable to the objections of other nations. And many do not think these objections will affect the U.S. international position. They argue that U.S. missile defenses will enhance, not degrade, international security, and that other nations will realize that they will benefit in the long run if the United States pursues this course. Some also note that international criticism will not, in the long run, affect U.S. policy objectives. Finally, as is noted below, the international reaction to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty was relatively quiet, in large part because Russia's reaction was so mild.

Russia's Reaction to U.S. ABM Withdrawal

During the first months of the Bush Administration, analysts and observers debated how Russia would react if and when the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty. They questioned whether Russia would continue to press its objections to U.S. policies on missile defense and the ABM Treaty, or whether it would try to reach an accommodation with the Bush Administration on a new framework for strategic stability. Many members of the Bush Administration believed that the United States would gain Russia's cooperation when Russia realized that the U.S. was committed to withdrawing from the ABM Treaty. They noted that Russia remained extremely interested in reductions in offensive nuclear forces and that the Bush Administration's plans to reduce U.S. forces would ease Russia's concerns about U.S. intentions.

Others, however, argued that Russia had outlined well-reasoned and complex objections to U.S. policies on missile defense and the ABM Treaty, and that it was not likely to change its views in the near term. Instead, they believed that Russia could follow through on its threats to withdraw from a range of arms control agreements and its plans to augment its nuclear forces. They argued that the United States might eventually become less secure, even if it deployed missile defenses, because it would be faced with a more adversarial, less cooperative Russia. And Russia would retain enough nuclear weapons to saturate the U.S. defenses and threaten the survival of the United States.

This debate grew silent in September 2001, after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Russia's President Putin was the first international leader to call President Bush after the attacks and he quickly offered his support to the U.S. war on terrorism. He allowed U.S. forces to use bases in former Soviet republics and he cooperated by sharing intelligence and Russian knowledge about Afghanistan. The U.S.-Russian relationship that emerged in the latter months of 2001 seemed to prove the Bush Administration's view that the two nations were no longer enemies and that they could build a new, more cooperative relationship.

Thus, when President Bush announced, on December 13, 2001, that the United States had given Russia the six-month notice of its intent to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, Russia's reaction differed sharply from the conventional wisdom. Reports indicated that the White House called President Putin in the days before the announcement, and that the two sides worked together to

craft statements that would indicate that the withdrawal would not upset their relationship. In his statement, President Putin said that he considered the U.S. decision to be “mistaken” and he emphasized that Russia had done everything it could to preserve the Treaty. But he indicated that the U.S. withdrawal would not undermine U.S.-Russian relations, and that the two sides should work out a “new framework of mutual strategic relations.”⁵⁴ The White House welcomed Putin’s statement and said that it agreed that the U.S. withdrawal presented “no threat to the security of the Russian Federation.” The White House also pledged to work with Russia to formalize reductions in offensive forces, a process that Russia viewed as a high priority.⁵⁵

Other officials and analysts in Russia responded with a similar, mild tone. Andrey Kokoshin, who had served as Russia’s Deputy Defense Minister and was a member of the Duma, also referred to the U.S. decision as a mistake, but said that it would not undermine Russia’s security because Russia had weapons systems that were capable of overcoming U.S. defenses. Kokoshin said that Russia would not have to “step up the capabilities” of its strategic nuclear forces.⁵⁶ Marshall Igor Sergeyev, the former Defense Minister and an adviser to Putin, echoed these views. He said that the U.S. withdrawal would not create any problems for Russia’s military security for 10-15 years. He also supported the negotiation of a new strategic framework, arguing that it “would be extremely undesirable to remain in a legal vacuum on strategic stability matters for a long time.”⁵⁷ Some in Russia, however, offered a more negative response. The Duma approved a resolution that called the U.S. withdrawal “mistaken and destabilizing.”⁵⁸

By the time the U.S. withdrawal took effect, on June 13, 2002, the United States and Russia had negotiated a new Treaty limiting strategic offensive weapons and the Presidents had signed a Joint Declaration outlining a new framework for cooperation between the two nations. Although some tensions remained in this relationship, particularly with respect to Russia’s nuclear cooperation with Iran, cooperation between the two nations continued to grow. The U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty no longer seemed like a potentially divisive issue. Foreign Minister Ivanov noted the event, but stated the “the primary aim now is to minimize the negative consequences of the U.S. withdrawal.”⁵⁹ He, and others, noted that Russia had convinced the United States to continue negotiations on reductions in strategic offensive forces, which represented a significant achievement for Russian diplomacy. Furthermore, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov noted that the U.S. missile defense system did not yet exist and, therefore, there was no reason for Russia to retaliate.⁶⁰

The Russian Duma, on the other hand, criticized the U.S. withdrawal, calling it a “gross political mistake” and proposed that, in response, Russia “declare itself free from its commitments under the START II Treaty.”⁶¹ The Russian government took this step on June 13, 2002, when the

⁵⁴ President Putin Responds to U.S. Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. December 13, 2001. Translated in FBIS CEP20011213000300.

⁵⁵ The White House. Response to Russian Statement on U.S. ABM Treaty Withdrawal. Office of the Press Secretary. December 13, 2001.

⁵⁶ Kokoshin says Russia has Systems Capable of Overcoming ABM Systems. Moscow NTV. December 13, 2001. Translated in FBIS CEP20011213000361.

⁵⁷ Kremlin Says U.S. Exit From ABM Treaty Poses No Threat to Russian Security. Agentstvo Voyennykh Novostey, December 14, 2001. Translated in FBIS CEP20021214000130.

⁵⁸ Russian Parliament Hits U.S. Pullout from Treaty. Washington Times. January 17, 2002. p. 17.

⁵⁹ FM Ivanov Says Russia Regrets U.S. Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Interfax. June 13, 2002. Translated in FBIS CEP20020613000005.

⁶⁰ Moscow Plays Down Threat of U.S. Missile Defense. Reuters. June 13, 2002/

⁶¹ Rogozin Says Duma Should Declare Russia’s Freedom from START II Commitments. Interfax. June 13, 2002. Translated in FBIS CEP20020613000084.

Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that Russia no longer felt bound by the Treaty.⁶² This step, however, was largely symbolic. Officials in both the U.S. and Russian governments have indicated that the Treaty has been set aside; they acknowledged its absence when they referred to the START I Treaty as “START” in the text of the new Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty.

Hence, although Russian officials criticized U.S. missile defense plans and promised to take military and diplomatic steps in response to the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty, the Russian reaction when the event occurred was far less aggressive. The changes in the international security environment, and the continuing improvements in the U.S.-Russian relationship, had essentially buried the debate over the ABM Treaty.

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Specialist in National Defense

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⁶² Moscow Plays Down Threat of U.S. Missile Defense. Reuters. June 13, 2002.